





JAMES DIXON & SONS
BRITANNIA METAL 'PUMPKIN'
TEAPOT


James Dixon & Sons silver plated tea and coffee service of pumpkin form with gilt interiors

https://www.eastbourneauction.com/catalogue/lot/8cac26aea4a9f6c770dfc7327d84b0aa/1DA09680FE122841B8E6C1F4CC703F8/saturday-collective-sale/	James Dixon & Sons silver plated tea and coffee service of pumpkin form with gilt interiors, all numbered E902P,	
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Vintage Teapot/coffee James Dixon & Son Sheffield

https://www.ebay.com/itm/195820541377	Vintage Teapot/coffee James Dixon & Son Sheffield 2039 4 Marked	
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James Dixon and Sons Vintage Pewter Tea & Coffee Pots


https://www.ebay.com/itm/314455181269	Set of 2 Antique James Dixon and Sons Vintage Pewter Tea & Coffee Pots	

James Dixon & Sons Sheffield Pewter Pumpkin


https://www.antiquesreporter.com.au/index.cfm/lot/143506-teapot-james-dixon-and-sons-sheffield-pewter-pumpkin-shape/	Tea-pot James Dixon & Sons Sheffield pewter pumpkin shape	

Ornate Pewter Teapot by James Dixon and Sons


Sheffield. Victorian C. 1888

https://www.etsy.com/listing/990018906/wonderfully-ornate-pewter-teapot-by-james-dixon-and-sons-sheffield-victorian-c1888-gift-dresser-display	Wonderfully Ornate Pewter Teapot by James Dixon and Sons Sheffield. Victorian C1888. Gift. Dresser Display	 A photograph of a large, ornate pewter teapot with a bulbous body, a high, fluted lid topped with a decorative finial, and a curved spout and handle. The teapot is resting on a wooden surface, possibly a tray or a table, with a wooden box visible in the background.
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Silver Pewter-Sheffield James Dixon & Sons

https://www.etsy.com/listing/591516063/english-teapot-silver-pewter-sheffield-james-dixon-sons-vintage-collection	English Teapot- Silver Pewter-Sheffield James Dixon & Sons- Vintage-Collection	 A photograph of a silver pewter teapot with a bulbous body, a high, fluted lid topped with a decorative finial, and a curved spout and handle. The teapot is resting on a dark blue surface.
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Antique James Dixon Victorian Pewter Pumpkin Teapot

https://www.etsy.com/listing/1137791608/antique-james-dixon-victorian-pewter-pumpkin-teapot?show_sold_out_detail=1&ref=nla_listing_details	Antique James Dixon Victorian Pewter Pumpkin Teapot	

TEAPOT WITH ACORN HANDLE TOP

https://www.ebay.ca/itm/115811860903	ANTIQUE VICTORIAN PEWTER TEAPOT TEA POT WITH ACORN HANDLE TOP	

BRITANNIA METAL

<p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britannia_metal</p>		

BRITANNIA METAL

Britannia metal (also called britannium or Britannia ware^[1]) is a specific type of pewter alloy, favoured for its silvery appearance and smooth surface. The composition by weight is typically about 92% tin, 6% antimony, and 2% copper.^[2] Britannia metal is usually spun rather than cast,^[1] and melts at 255 degrees Celsius.^[3]

HISTORY

Britannia metal was first produced^[4] in 1769 or 1770. James Vickers created it after purchasing the formula from a dying friend. It was originally known as "Vickers White Metal" when made under contract by the Sheffield manufacturers Ebenezer Hancock and Richard Jessop. In 1776 James Vickers took over the manufacturing himself and remained as owner until his death in 1809, when the company passed to his son John and son-in-law Elijah West. In 1836 the company was sold to John Vickers's nephew Ebenezer Stacey (the son of Hannah Vickers and John Stacey).

After the development of electroplating with silver in 1846, Britannia metal was widely used as the base metal for silver-plated household goods and cutlery.^[5] The abbreviation EPBM on such items denotes "electroplated Britannia metal". Britannia metal was generally used as a cheaper alternative to electroplated nickel silver (EPNS) which is more durable.

Until 2016, britannium was used to make the solid core of the Oscar statuettes. The 8½ lb (4 kg) statuettes were Britannia metal plated with gold.^[6] The awards have since changed to a bronze core. In his essay "A Nice Cup of Tea", writer George Orwell asserts that "britanniaware" teapots "produce inferior tea" when compared to chinaware.^[7]

Britannia Metal-

A New Perspective



Britannia coffee pot by GEORGE KICHINGS. Ca. 1840.



Photographs
by Alan Anderson

Bachelor size Britannia
boat-shaped teapot.
Unmarked. Ca. 1815.



Britannia cream pitcher by
BROADHEAD & ATKINS. Ca. 1860.



Small Britannia tea caddy by JAMES
DIXON & SONS. Ca. 1840.

Part One: The History of Britannia Metal

by DR. JACK L. SCOTT

BRITANNIA SEEMS to be the least understood and most frequently misinterpreted of all 19th century metalwares. The best way to untangle the many misconceptions concerning this often maligned ware is to review its background, the reasons it came into being, and to follow its ups and downs in the ensuing years.

Sheffield, England; in southern Yorkshire, where Britannia metal originated, is the seat of many other "firsts." For centuries, Sheffield craftsmen have been recognized for the high quality of their work in whatever field and the pride they took in it. Until mid-18th century, the main craft was cutlery; Sheffield is still known as the "steel city." Jim Bowie had his famous Bowie knives made there. Stainless steel

originated there, and high quality cutlery is still manufactured in its factories.

In 1759, a second important craft began in Sheffield—silver plate. To provide a new middle class with table and decorative ware less expensive than solid silver, the process of plating was developed which is now generally called "Old Sheffield plate" to differentiate it from silverplate made by later methods.

By this early process, a thin layer of silver was adhered to each side of a block of copper and the block rolled into sheets of the desired thickness. These sheets of "plate," silver on each side and copper in the center, were then made up in the same fashion as solid silver pieces but at much lower

cost. The savings were in the silver content; labor costs at that time were of little significance.

Because the plated sheets, when cut, showed their copper centers, various edges and mountings were devised to hide the copper, creating decorative effects that were new and distinctive to old Sheffield Plate. Great numbers of platers in Sheffield and Birmingham turned out a wide range of articles in this immensely popular ware before 1841 when electroplating was perfected and came to the fore.

A decade or so after Sheffield plate had been introduced, about 1769, James Vickers of Sheffield began to produce a "white metal" which was an even less expensive substitute for silver. His formula was similar to traditional pewter except that antimony and a trace of copper were added to the tin content in place of lead. This change in formula allowed the metal to be rolled into sheets while still maintaining characteristics good for casting; it could be either cast or rolled into sheet stock. It also produced a color much closer to that of silver than the traditional pewter which contained lead.

Vickers and the others who took up the trade, copied the Sheffield plate craftsmen closely in style and method. Pieces were cut or stamped out of sheet stock and carefully soldered together. Gadroon and other decorative borders and edges were soldered in place to complete the total appearance of Sheffield plate. Spouts were cast or stamped in two halves and soldered together. Feet, when applied, were also cast. Until about 1840, the handles of all Britannia tea and coffee pots made in Sheffield were of wood. After that time, handles were also made of cast metal.

In 1792, the term "Britannic Metal" was first used for this "white metal," and by 1800, there were twelve firms in Sheffield producing Britannia metalwares of excellent quality. Just as the workmanship of the Sheffield craftsmen was

in no way of less quality than the silversmiths, the workmanship of the Britannia metalsmiths was no less than that of the platers. The only difference lay in the quality and expense of the materials from which the articles were made.

As the old Sheffield plate trade began to give way in 1842 to electroplate, the Britannia metal craftsmen, capitalizing on their years of successful experience, introduced construction and design innovations of their own. So expert were they that many articles of this rather soft metal are still available to collectors today.

The Britannia metal trade flourished in Sheffield and spread to Birmingham, where the quality was not always equal to that of Sheffield. Wares were being produced in America by 1824, though here again workmanship and design were inferior to Sheffield's.

In 1822 there were 14 firms making Britannia metalwares in Sheffield; by 1879, there were 43. During the period from 1769 to 1900, more than 300 different firms produced Britannia metal in that city. Several do so today. One of them, James Dixon & Sons, which began in 1804, is currently producing Britannia wares along with a complete line of silver and silverplate.

Is It Pewter?

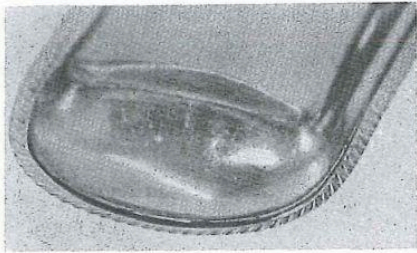
"Is it pewter?" is the most frequently asked question concerning Britannia metal. To put this nightmare of misunderstanding to rest once and for all, the answer is definitely, "Yes, Britannia metal *is* pewter."

From a metallurgical point of view, there is no official or scientific formula for pewter. Pewter is a romantic term given by English speaking peoples to products made of a high tin alloy. People of other countries unabashedly call such articles tin, as *zinn* in Germany, *etain* in France. The formula for pewter has always varied greatly. While the basic ingredient



Britannia tea service—teapot, covered sugar bowl, cream pitcher and waste bowl, by JAMES DIXON & SONS. Ca. 1838.

Illustrations from the author's collection.



Close-up of a Britannia candle snuffer tray showing gadroon edge which has been soldered to the rim in the style of old Sheffield plate. JAMES DIXON & SON. Ca. 1830.

is tin in the proportion of 80 to 90 percent, the remaining 10 or 20 percent may be either lead or antimony with traces of copper or bismuth.

The traditional early pewterers who flourished until about 1820, used lead with the tin. The Britannia metalsmiths used antimony. Since lead is dark in color, heavy in weight, soft, and alas, poisonous, the substitution of antimony served to improve an existing product, giving it a better color, a harder body, and rendering it nontoxic. Britannia metal is, then, high quality pewter. According to Earnest Hedges in his *Tin and Its Alloys* (1960), modern pewter, often called "lead free pewter," is made by exactly the same formula as the 19th century Britannia metal.

Various factors have tended to downgrade Britannia metal wares in the minds of collectors and caused them to dismiss as unworthy even really fine pieces.

When Cotterell in his magnificent *Old Pewter, Its Makers and Marks*, wrote that no serious collector would include Britannia metal items in his collection, the remark was taken literally by collectors in general. But it must be remembered that his concern was with pewter of the 17th and early 18th

centuries and he was writing for other purists whose interests did not extend beyond that period. Chargers, tankards, and flagons were their "true pewter," and in 1929 when the book was published, such pieces were still available. The tea and coffee services of the early and mid-19th century "hard pewter" were outside of limits they had set for their interest.

The general collector was also discouraged by the poor quality of much of the "late" Britannia ware. Britannia metal had reached its peak about 1850, and from about 1870, it went into a rather debasing period.

During the years from 1870 to 1910, enormous quantities of electroplated wares were produced in Sheffield and Birmingham. Electroplating, which involves immersing a ready made item into solutions and electric current, did not suit the old Sheffield platers whose system was to cut items from silver-clad sheets and "build" their wares piece by piece. But electroplating did appeal to the Britannia metalsmiths. Their metal plated very well, and since their original function was to produce a substitute for Sheffield plate, the electroplating of their made-up wares brought them even closer to their original purpose. Nearly all the Britannia metal firms converted to electroplate merely by the addition of plating vats. By 1880, almost the entire production of some 50 Britannia metal firms in Sheffield received the additional process of silver plating.

As the industrialization of the 19th century grew, so did the labor movement, and labor costs became an increasing factor in the manufacture of goods. This, along with severe competition, caused many metalware firms to produce wares of poor quality with very thin gauge metal and the lightest coating of silverplate. While nickel silver was also used for plating, Britannia metal was the principal base metal in use. These cheap electroplated wares of 1870 to 1910 gave Britannia metal the reputation for being a base metal for cheap goods, even though many Sheffield firms continued to make high quality electroplated goods with Britannia metal base.



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